

5

A

MODERATE

SHORT

DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Tenderneſs of Conſcience.

By JOHN BRADSHAW Rector of *Ettingham* in *Suffex*.

Aſſ. 10. 14. Not ſo Lord.

*Felix Conſcientia, in qua miſericordia & veritas obviaverunt ſibi,
juſtitia & pax oſculata ſunt. St. Bern. de interiori domo.*

*Ego nec tumultum
Nec mori per vim meam, Te habente
Carole terræ. Hor. Car. lib. 3. od. 14.*

L O N D O N,

Printed by *John Beſt* for *Andrew Crook* at the *Green
Dragon* in *Saint Pauls Church-yard*. 1663.



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Perlegi hunc tractatum de Tenera Conscientia in
quonihil reperio aut sanæ doctrinæ aut bonis mo-
ribus contrarium quo minus Imprimatur.

Ex ædibus Lamberbanis
Mart. 26. 1663.

Dan. Nicols R. P. D.
Arch. Cant. Capel.
Domesticus.

A Men qui dicitur, qui Alpha
& Omega, quærentibus qui
via est, credentibus veritas, viventi-
bus vita, inutilem me servum suum
dirigat ne errem extra viam, regat ne
agam contra veritatem, erigat ne ca-
dam infra vitam, Amen.



THE PREFACE.

Having provided upon that dark and gloomy day Januar. 30. last, some meditations upon that Scripture 1. Sam. 24. 5. After I had shewed how a self-smiting heart, or a tender conscience is ever most tender of offering the least injury to the Lords Anointed, and how much the implacable enemies of his late Majesty of ever glorious memory had cut off from him, I thought it might be no ill office to any, but possibly serviceable to the desires of many who have desired to be acquainted with the meaning of that, to which so many for many years have pretended, if I took a brief Survey of a self-smiting heart or tenderness of conscience in general. The subject is purely Theological, and therefore not unsutable to a Church mans search : nor know I of any, ei. her at home or abroad, that have written professedly and directly of that subject. I handle it only as then a simplex : not taking upon me to define how far our governours may or may not bear with, or yield to tender, dubious, or scrupulous consciences.

The Preface.

ces. I have ever been very tender and wary of dealing in any State affairs, whether purely political, or mixt, as partly theological, partly political. I leave that to the Higher powers, only begging of God to guide them in all things for the best. Four things I have aim'd at, and endeavour'd in this discourse: First truth, that I may not deceive: Secondly clearness, that I may not confound: Thirdly moderation, that I may not offend: Fourthly brevity, that I may not tire. Blessed be the King of Kings, that hath not only restored us our King again, but a King so gracious, so earnestly and constantly desirous of the well-fare of the souls, consciences, and external prosperity of his people. God give to all his people hearts to make a dutiful and grateful return of Love, Loyalty, and Obedience, Amen.

Jam fides, & pax, & honor pudorque
Priscus, & neglecta redire virtus
Audet, &c. *Hor. carm. secul.*

Errata.

P 4. l. 1. 15. r. expressing, p. 3. l. 15. r. cold, p. 4. in *mar. r.* 25, p. 4. l. 18. r. plainness, p. 4. in *mar. r.* audeo dicere, p. 6. l. 14. r. vegetative, p. 6. l. 26. r. intentions, p. 6. l. 28. r. intention, p. 11. in *mar. r.* ponderant, p. 16. l. 32. r. expected, p. 16. in *mar. r.* 1, 2. p. 17. l. 3. r. and knows, p. 19. in *mar. r.* vel, p. 21. l. 11. r. in our callings.

(1)

OF

TENDERNESS

OF

Conscience.

CHAP. I.



However the phrase or (a) expression of *tenderness of Conscience*, is not to be found in Holy Scripture, *totidem verbis*, yet the thing it self is both in precepts and examples. In * precepts 1 Tim. 3. 9. holding the mystery of faith in a *pure Conscience*. 1 Thes. 5. 22. abstain from all appearance of evil, or (as it may be read) from all kind of evil. Besides these and many other precepts, we have † examples many: Of David 1 Sam. 24. 5. troubled for cutting of his Sovereigns Skirt; of Paul Aft. 23. 1. and Aft. 24. 16. and elsewhere. Other examples there are, which for brevity I pretermitt. That of *Josiah* usually alledged, is not so clearly pertinent 2 Chron. 34. 27. the tenderness of his heart expressing it self in humiliation.

2. Tenderness of Conscience, or a tender Conscience, is a gracious mean betwixt a *scrupulous* Conscience on the *right hand*, and a *wide, sluggish* or *fearful* Conscience on the *left hand*; whereby we are quickly and deeply sensible of having done, and wary of doing any evil God hath clearly forbidden, or of

(a) Taken from the most tender parts of the body, as the eye, &c. or from some part newly healed.

* Tim. 5. 22. keep thy self pure, Eccles. 9. 2. as he that feareth an oath.

† Gen. 44. 17. God forbid I should do so, 2 Sam. 24. 10. Davids heart smote him, 1 Chro. 11. 19. my God forbid it me that I should do this thing.

omitting any good he hath clearly commanded.

(a) *Medium*
per participa-
tionem, seu
secundum for-
mam per ne-
gationem utri-
usque extremi
seu per priva-
tionem Jandu-
nus.

3. A mean or mediocrity is that which lies betwixt two extreames, and is ordinarily twofold : (a) 1. Of *Participation*, so a gray colour is a mean betwixt black and white, as partaking of both. 2. Of *Abnegation*, so moral virtues are a mean betwixt two vicious extreames, as denying to share with either, but rather receding from, and opposing both. The former I may not unfitly term, (b) *Medium compositionis* ; the latter *Medium oppositionis*.

(b) *Medium compositionis vel oppositionis.*

4. These means are of several sorts, Natural, Artificial and Moral. Not to speak of the 2. former, a Moral mean is twofold, 1. A *Virtue*, 2. A thing *Indifferent*. A *Virtue* is a medium, whose two ex-

(c) 'Η δὲ
ἀρετὴ οὐκ ἐστὶν
ἐν ἡμῶν τῶν ἐν ἡμῶν

ἐπὶ. Ἐν οἷς ἡ μὲν ὑπερβολὴ ἀμαρτανία, καὶ ἡ ἁλλοψύχη ψυχὴ τὸ δὲ μέσον ἐπιμετρία &c. *Arist. Ethic. lib. 2. c. 6.*

5. All moral virtues, however for their quality they are an *axioms*, and for their degree, yet as, to their

(d) Τῶς ἀφ' ἑ
 ἑσπας ἡ ὑπαρ-
 ριστὶς τοῦ ἑλ-
 λαντισμοῦ τὸ
 ἀφ' ἑσπας ἡ
 σὺν τῇ, *ibid.*

(c) *Rebus angustis animosus atque fortis vela, Hor.*

appare, sapienter idem, contrahes vento nimium secundo, turgida.

6. As it is in *Moral virtues*, so it is in *Christian graces*, they are seated between two extremes, which mean betwixt letting the hair grow at full length, and Thaving it quite off. So *Ezek.* 44. 20. Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long, they shall only poll their heads, *spoken of the Jewish Priests.*

yet

yet are not only by *defect* and *excess*, but by a *contrary deviation* also from a just intermediate rectitude. *Deut.* 5. 32. you shall observe to do what the Lord your God hath commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand nor to the left. *Mat.* 7. 14. Strait is the gate, and (a) narrow is the way.

Contrition for sin is a mean 'twixt *hardness* and *wor-
sorrow*, 1 *Cor.* 5. 2. on one hand, and being over-
whelmed with over much sorrow on the other, 2 *Cor.* 2.
7. Justifying faith is a mean betwixt works, as pre-
tending to justification on one side, and a dead faith
void of works on the other. Hope is seated 'twixt
desperation and presumption; Charity 'twixt jealousy,
rash suspicion on one side, and blind affection on the
other; Zeal 'twixt a ~~cold~~ or (which is worse) a
lukewarm temper on this side, and a phrenetical fu-
rious distemper on that side; Temperance is a keeping
the body in subjection between pining and pinching
on one part, and glutting and pampering it on the
other. Timothy being infirm was advised to drink
no longer water, but a little wine for his stomachs
sake and his often infirmities, 1 *Tim.* 5. 23. And
Amnon had done well (of whom we read 2 *Sam.* 12.
28) if he had drunk no longer wine, but a little wa-
ter for his souls sake and filthy lustfulness. Patience
is betwixt repining and raging on the left hand, and
a stupified senselessness on the right. Self denial 'twixt
self love, resolving to lose nothing though God call
for it; and self neglect or injury, in giving up all
when we need not, as in the *van* of poverty. Spirit-
ual joy 'twixt a drooping heavy spirit, and a carnal
wanton profuse joy.

The fear of God is a narrow path, between a
(b) slavish fear on one side, and a want of all fear
on the other; between the spirit of bondage, *Rom.* 8.

*licet bonum facit non tamen bene facit. Sanctus Aug. de spir. & litera. Nemo invitu
tus bene facit, etiamsi bonum est quod facit, invitum facit qui solo timore facit,
lib. confels. 1. c. 12.*

(a) *'Pdliav*
αὐτὸ τὸ εὖ-
τυχὸν τὸ σπο-
νδῶ χαλεπὸν
δὲ τὸ ἐπι-
χρῖν. Aristot.
ubi supra, sed
tendit in ardua
virens. Ovid.
cold

Sicut inter a-
quam, &
ignem tenenda
est via, ut nec
excursatur homo
nec demergit-
tur; ita inter
apicem vici-
orum in excessu
& inter voraci-
nam eorum-
dem in defectu,
iter nostrum
temperare de-
betur ne vel
ad dextram vel
sinistram decli-
nemus Augu-
stin.

(b) *Qui solo*
timore facit
quod jubetur

Heb. 2. where love hath not predominion above fear and fearlesnes, where fear hath not predominion above security.

7. As Christian *graces*, so Christian *duties* are fenced within the same narrow path. (a) To come without preparation to them, is to offer indignity to them; to spend over much time in it, is to inroach upon them. In hearing, we walk upon a narrow bridge, and must take heed how we bear; for we must neither superciliously or irreverently hear, because it is (b) God that speaks by man; nor must we blindly and carelessly swallow all we hear, because it is but Man by whom God speaks. In the duty of Preaching, we are neither on one hand, so to Preach the law and damnation as to drive men to desperation; nor on the other, so to manage the Gospel and the sweet promises, as to draw them to presumption: we must speak as the oracles of God, and yet use plainag minister milk, and yet strong meat. In reception of the Lords Supper I must strike a middle path, betwixt profane irreverence and superstitious adoration. (c) In giving alms I must pass between the right hand and the left.

(c) Non so miscet conscientia tua laudis humana appetitu cum in elemosyna facienda d. vinum praeceptum contendis implere. Aug.

Disputes and controversies are the Churches convolution fits.

Auream quisquis mediocritatem diligit, autem, &c. Hor. lib. 2. od. 10.

8. To him that impartially & diligently searches into the most dark and difficult disputes, that do at this day trouble the Church, it will I think be apparent, that the truth lies in a mean betwixt two unsafe extreams. This I humbly conceive might be made appear in the difficulties concerning Gods infallible foresight, and yet his permission of what is not pleasing to him. We need neither deny or impair Gods purity or holiness, nor yet his providence; neither the freedome of his grace, nor yet that freedome of will which is necessary to a rational creature. The same may be said of the controversies concerning unbelief, perfection in this life, the virtue and efficacy of the Sacraments, original

original sin, Christs mediation, Gods justification of a sinner, assurance of salvation, perseverance in grace, the Lords day, and all the disputes about worship and discipline. The middle path in all which and several others, though as to my private satisfaction I have tracted in some measure, yet *here* I must not do it, having already been too large upon the *genus* of a tender Conscience, contrary to the rules of short and positive discourses; only my *intire* love to *moderation* (of which I crave pardon, if it keep not a *mean* also) hath drawn me out so far, *nor* can I pass from it, till I have observed one thing more, *viz.*

9. That amongst all those *several ways* of Christian Religion (ob that there were but one way, though upon condition I forfeited and lost my life as often as there are several ways) that seems the truest that stands in the middle betwixt what is idolatrous and what profane, what is *toyish* and *superstitious*, and what is *naked* and *rude*; holding to the Scriptures against the one, and to judgement and practice of *venerable antiquity*, where the Scriptures are dark, against the other. And for this, view one of the *pearls* that dropt from the rich *Pen* of our late dear and dread Sovereign King Charles the Martyr, in his ΕΙΚΩΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ, a book so excellent for *Wisdom, Judgment, Piety, Charity, Elegancy*, that it is worthy to be in the *Hands, Head, and Heart* of all Christians; In his Farewell Letter to the Prince of Wales, now our Gracious King, speaking of the Religion established in the Church of England, his Majesty gives it this Elogium.

I have tryed it, and after much search and many disputes, have concluded it to be the best in the world, not only in the community as Christian, but also in the special notion as reformed, keeping the middle way between the pomp of Superstiti-
ous;

Tene medium, si non vis perdere modum, locus medius tutus est, medium sedes modici, & modus virtus, Bern. de consid. lib. 3. cap. 10.

Sancta ecclesia consistit unitate fidelium, sicut corpus unitate membrorum, Gregor. Mor. lib. 29.

Adicis rebus longius erum est, Senec. Trag. in Agamem.

ous Tyranny, and the meanness of Phantastick Anarchy.

Kings standing higher, see farther then other men in matters of Church and State.

CHAP. II.

Virtutibus homo disponitur ad actiones suas quatenus a ratione moveatur, donis vero quatenus moveatur a Deo, Aquinas. Virtus theologica.

Possunt aliqua bona fieri non beneficientibus a quibus sunt, August. contra Julian. Hypocrita sunt simulatores mali adjuvantes se ficta charitate captantes omnes motus omnia verba sanctorum, in omnibus inquires. St. Aug. in Psal. 40.

Mat. 12. 10.

I. **T**His tenderness of Conscience is a *gracious* mean, which distinguishes it from a *bare moral* virtue: For however there is a Conscience in every man, as having the law of nature in his heart, so that a mere natural man or Heathen, may have some kind of tenderness of Conscience; yet here I speak of it as it is a *Christian* virtue, and therefore call it a *gracious* mean.

2. *Christian* graces do eminently contain under them all *moral* virtues, as the *reasonable* soul contains the *sensitive* and *vegetative*. Moral virtues being also as the *stock*, and graces as the *grafts*: for as the *stock* may bring forth fruit, yet *barb*, not *pleasing*, *sower*, not *acceptable* till it be grafted; so a *moral* man may bring forth much fruit, yet not *pleasing* to God, till *grace* be grafted on him.

3. Therefore that tenderness which an *hypocrite* or carnal man pretends to, is not *true tenderness*, nor *pleasing* to God: Yea the *more tender* such a person makes himself, the *more seared* is his conscience through *hypocrisie*. *Absolm 2 Sam. 15. 6.* pretended much tenderness about his vow in *Hebron*, when his *intentions* were to *dethrone* his father. The *graceless* Pharisees did pretend a tenderness of the Sabbath, but their *intensions* was to *accuse* our Saviour.

4. Whence it follows, that the *more sound* and *well grown* grace is in the heart, the *more tender* is the conscience;

conscience; and contrariwise the less grace, the less true tenderness. And for a graceless person to pretend to it, is as absurd as for a Dwarf to pretend to stature, or a lame man to agility.

5. This therefore being a gracious disposition, must necessarily have God for the Author, or efficient cause, which I did not explicitly lay down in the definition, as supposing that it is sufficiently understood in the Genus: James 1. 17. Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the father of lights, &c. *Dicendum quod Deus operatur in voluntate & natura sicut causa prima in secundis*, Aquin. in Distinct. 24. lib. 2.

6. The final cause also may here be taken in, which is to keep us from sinning against him. The conscience being Gods Commissioner in the soul, to examine what we do, keeping therein a petty Sessions, whereby preparation is made for the great Assize. The tender conscience is a faithful judge, the scrupulous conscience a foolish, the wide, seared conscience a corrupt bribed judge. If *natura nil agit frustra*, much less the God of nature, who hath put this principle of nature into the soul of man.

*Quicquid sanctum cogitaveris
Dei munus est,
Dei inspiratio,
Dei gratia,
Ambr. de Abel
& Cain cap.
ult.*

*Jer. 32. 40.
Panem semper
ante oculos ver-
sari putant, qui
peccaverunt.
Cicero. pro mi-
lone.
Nondabitur pe-
ctoris mei con-
scientia, &
aperto corde vi-
debuntur litera
peccatorum,
Orig. hom. 12*

CHAP. III.

Of the right hand extreame, viz a scrupulous conscience.

Scrupulous is a diminutive of *scrupus*, which is a little sharp piece of a stone; from whence somewhat forcedly some would have a scrupulous conscience so called, because as a small stone in the shoe causes a man to go in pain, so a scruple in the conscience is irksome to him that acts and scruples at what he acts.

que nos ladic, nam pressus pede sollicitudinem creat Altenst. vocab.

*Scrupulus di-
minutivum à
scrupus propriè
est lapillus bre-
vis & asper
qui in calceo
lateus plerun-*

Buc.

*Dubia plus tor-
quent mala,
Sen. Trag. in
Agamem.*

But more probably it seems so termed from *scrupulus*, which is one of the *least weights*, because *such* a conscience stumbles at things of the *least weight* or moment, not worth our while to trouble our thoughts with it.

2. A *scrupulous* conscience is that which sticks at *small* and *trivial* things, upon *small* and *trivial* reasons.

*Res media di-
cuntur, quæ
per se sive ex
sua natura sim-
pliciter asti-
mata, nec bona
nec mala sunt
ut esca, & po-
tus, & similia,
Beza epist. ad
peregrinarum
in Anglia ec-
clesiarum fra-
tres.*

3. I call those things *small* and *trivial*, which are in their own nature *meerly indifferent*; or if they have *some degree of evil or good*, are not *discovered* so to be in a *clear way* to him that scruples at them; in which regard if not in *themselves*, yet as to him they are *trivial*.

4. Those *reasons or arguments* I call *trivial*, which in the judgement of *common reason* (not clouded with *passion*) together with *common illumination*, have no force or strength in them.

5. *Common reason* is that which every man is *indowed with*, who is *compos mentis*, and *grown up to years of discretion*; and that *common illumination*, which every Christian is *endowed with*, who may be thought fit to *partake of the Lords Supper*, as to matter of *knowledge*.

6. *Instances* of a *scrupulous* conscience many may be given; these few may serve for a *tast*. To scruple in *extream thirst* to drink in *that cup*, which another hath drunk in to *excess*; to scruple to go a *mile* to the Church on the *Sabbath*, because there is *labour* in it. To stick at *eating fish* on a *fasting day*, because *some* refuse to *eat flesh* on that day; to stick at *uncovering the head* or *bowing the knee* to a *superiour*, because we give such worship to God.

In like manner for a *candidate* or *inceptor* to scruple at putting on, suppose, a *Master of Arts Cap*, *Gown*, *Hood* or *Habit*, because *some* such like habiliments were in use before the Reformation; nor can I think that *many* of the *Presbyterian way*, do really scruple

at

To scruple to
set our foot
cross over a
straw in the
high way for
fear of making
the figure of
the Cross.
Eo demum ve-
niet, ut super
transversam
(quæ dicitur)
fessucam inco-
dere nefanditat
Calv. Instit.
lib. 3. c. 19.
Sect. 7.

at a *white garment* in Divine Service : for if there were any colour of sin in a colour (which in truth there is not) *red* should have more of sin in it then *white*, to which the deepest died sins are compared, *Isa.* 1. 18. *Rev.* 17. 3. Justification being compared to the *whiteness* of wool and snow ; and sanctification to *linnen pure and white*, *Rev.* 19. 8.

Yet the chief and leading men of that way, did at certain times in the sight of many thousands, wear *Scarlet Gowns* and *Hoods* in the Universities, not only at *Disputations* and *Congregations*, but at *sermons*, yea (if I mistake not) did preach ad *Clerum* in their *scarlet Copes*, one of the gravest habits in the world, and much used in one of the Universities at solemn times. Wherein a man may wonder, as why they should not scruple as much at *scarlet* as at *white* ; so much more, why they should stumble more at *white* of *linnen*, then at the *white* of *miniver* wherewith *that habit* is largely indorsed.

Of *School-writers*, none that I know speaks more to the purpose then *Antoninus*, from whom some Modern Writers seem to borrow that little that they have upon that subject. First he shews the several names given to scrupulosity : some call it (says he) *pussillanimity*, some *fear of conscience*, some an *erroneous conscience* ; and gives this definition. *Est vacillatio quedam consurgens cum formidine ex aliquibus conjecturis debilibus & incertis. i. e.* A wavering of mind rising in us, with fear upon some uncertain and weak conjectures.

He after distinguishes betwixt *fides*, *scientia*, *opinio*, *dubitatio*, and *scrupulus* ; and tells us that a doubting conscience, is *pendulous* betwixt both parts ; but a *scrupulous* fastens upon one part drawn by weak reasons. I see but little difference betwixt *vacillatio* and *dubitatio*, nor is it necessary either to conceive of

A quibusdam vocatur erronea conscientia, ab aliis timor conscientie, ab aliis pusillanimitas, Anton. Sum. part. 1. Tract. 3 c. 10. Sect. 9.

tionem, & scrupulum seu suspensionem — Demum scrupulus ex levis conjecturis seu mediis, & multum debilibus movetur ad unam partem, ibid.

a dubious conscience as not fasting, because when it doth so it may be doubting, nor doth a scrupulous conscience seem always to close with one part. Having after laid down the *effects* of scrupulosity, he proceeds to the *causes*, viz. *melancholy* hurting the brain; *temptation* from Satan stirring up the melancholy humors, and he produces *Avicenna* so teaching; sometimes overmuch *fasting and watching*, sometimes the society of scrupulous persons, one being apt to possess another with scruples. (a) Next he proceeds to the *remedies* of it: As 1. That they should not be over harshly reprov'd: he should have added (b) except the *scruple* be *dangerous* to Church or State. 2. That they should be perswaded to lay it aside. 3. (c) Diligently search the Scriptures, *Jam. 1. If any man lack wisdom, &c.* 4. By Godly sorrow to prepare for the receiving the grace of God. 5. By *subjecting* their understanding and judgments to their *superiors* in wisdom and office, *Prov. 3. Lean not to thine own understanding*: He cites to this purpose the words of the learned Chancellour of Paris, *Unum hoc damus generale documentum, viz. facile, credere sapientium & bonorum judicio, & contra communes eorum sententias non leviter sibi formare scrupulos anxios & timidos.* We give this general instruction, easily to yield to the judgement of wise and good men, and not lightly to frame to our selves troublesome scruples against their common judgement. And if a scrupulous person shall say, *Utinam talis esset prelati noster qualis Bernardus, crederem facilliter imperanti, & acquiescerem consulenti.* If our Church-governour were such a one as Bernard, I would believe easily what he should tell me, and rest in what he shall counsel me. He answers, *Error, debes illi obedire non ut homini sed ut Deo, cujus vices gerit: nam Christus dicit qui vos audit me audit.* Thou erre'st, for thou oughtest to obey him not as man,

but

Causatur quandoque ex complexione ad timorem idonea, viz. frigida: quandoque ex agilitudine manica, vel melancholicâ--per quam leditur imaginatio--causatur ex tentatione diaboli: a, & ex societate timidorum.

(a) Non debent scrupulosi durè corrigi: sed animari ad depouendum pugilantimitatem & scrupulum.

(b) Of which danger our governours are Judges.

(c) Debita ad gratiam Dei preparatio, Sollicitudo sacre Scripturae in dagatione orationis devota continuatio opinionis alie cujus tuta electio: obedientie humilis imitatio: scrupulum animosa abjectio, discreta preceptorum interpretatio.

but as God, in whose stead he is; thus far *Antonine Arch-bishop of Florence*.

8. By what he writes, or others from him, themselves, or others, it is manifest there is such a thing as a scrupulous conscience; that this conscience is anxious, and no doubt in some degree dubious, there being little difference betwixt *dubitatio & vacillatio*; that this scrupulosity is a sin in whomsoever it is, as proceeding from evil causes, viz. ignorance, error, or instability of mind, or pride, some affecting and professing scrupulosity. For by this they make that to be sin, which else had been none; *faciunt sibi peccata, ubi non sunt peccata*, says one, It proceeds also from other ill causes aforesaid.

9. There is a kind or rather show of conscience, which some call a perverse or preposterous conscience; such was that of the Pharisees *Mat. 23. 23.* who paid tithes of mint, annis, &c. and neglected, &c. who strained at a Gnat and swallowed a Camel, *Mat. 23. 24.* Or to give a more modern, and too well known an instance, to be so narrow throated as to strain at the Churches Prayers, and to be so wide throated as to swallow the Churches Lands; to scruple to give a penny to the building or repairing of a Church, a thing laudable, pious, and necessary, and to stick at no cost towards the dethroning and destroying of their Sovereign, a thing unnatural and impious. But this being but an hypocritical pretense of conscience, cannot be referred to this head, which treats of real scrupulosity.

Say to them that are of a fearful heart be strong, *Isa. 35. 4.*

Disc. de temp. Conscientia mala est conscientia perversa, quam habent qui peccata parva ponderant, magnam curant minima observatis, maxima committis.
Aug. quest. evang. lib. 1. qu. 35.

CHAP. IV.

Of the left hand extreame, viz. a wide, loose, and seared conscience.

*Conscientia dilata-
ta quam
habent illi qui
non ponderant
crassiora peccata-
ta. et de com-
munibus non
curant. Disc.
de temp. Ser. 9.*

*Rom. 13. wrath
and conscience
are distin-
guish'd.*

1. **A** Wide or loose Conscience, is that which is not tenderly sensible of having done, nor tenderly wary of doing what is clearly and manifestly evil, out of an inward principle.

2. If a man forbear evil to be done, or is troubled for evil done, only because it is *punish'd* or *punishable* by *humane laws*, this is not tenderness. And therefore looseness of conscience is chiefly seen and discern'd in the commission and admission of such sins, without remorse or regard, which conscience and the fear of God should restrain, and are not punish'd by humane laws, or if so, do not easily or speedily come to humane cognizance.

3. Whence it follows, that looseness of conscience is most discover'd in secret sins, and consequently more discernible to a mans self then to another, till it break out into open enormities without open signs of a wounded or troubled soul.

4. That which some Divines call a *sleepy* or *dull* conscience; is but a farther degree of a loose conscience; for when men have *inured* themselves to sin against conscience, this (a) custome takes away quickness of sense. Yet is not a stupified conscience without some degree of feeling when God awakens it either with a *powerful word* Act. 2. 37. they were *pricked in their heart*, and said men and brethren what shall we do? or with a *powerful work*, as in *Pharaohs* case Exod. 9. 27. I and my people are sinful. For as such who are *Lethargical* are not easily awakened, but by some *great noise*, so neither is a sluggish conscience without a powerful word or work of God.

5. The

(a) *Si autem
vincere et im-
perare consue-
runt laboriosa
difficultate su-
perantur. Aug.
de civ. Dei
lib. 21. c. 16.*

5. The *seared* conscience seems to be the highest degree of a loose or wide conscience, *Eph. 4. 19.* who being past feeling, &c. *1 Tim. 4. 2.* having their conscience seared with an hot iron. For as that which hath been *seared* feels nothing, so neither doth a seared conscience, till it feels hell fire; and it is commonly the effect of an hypocritical profession of the faith, or of a wicked departure from the faith.

6. The *cauterized* conscience as it is of the same species with a wide and loose conscience may be called a degree of it, yea the highest degree: as it proceeds from looseness it may be an effect of it; as it increases looseness and widens the conscience, it may be a cause of it.

Canterium est corruptio in carne per ignem, ex qua egreditur continua putredo.
Aquinas in
1 Tim. 4.

7. Of all the judgments of God in this life, it is the greatest to be given up to such a searedness or reprobate sense. For however Desperation continued in, cuts off from all mercy, yet is a seared conscience no less desperate, keeping off a sense of sin, and therein any due sense of mercy. From which miserable estate the Lord deliver us.

CHAP. V.

Of the difference of a tender conscience from other graces nearest and likeliest to it.

1. It thus differs from the fear of God, that this properly respects the (m) future *Jer. 32. 40.* I will put my fear into their heart, that they shall not depart from me; but tenderness of conscience respects as well the time past as the future. The fear of God (m) *Job 1. 1.* fear'd God and eschewed evil. *Quis hanc habet omnem edis iniquitatem--*
per hunc timorem Dei universa deserimus, mundo abrenunciamus, nosque ipsos (sicut Dominus ait) abnegamus nobis. Bern. de don. sp. sancti *Jer. 3. c. 1.*
God

Ecclesiastic. 1.
21. The fear
of the Lord
drives away
sin.

2 Cor. 7. 11.
that ye for-
rowed after a
godly sort
what careful-
ness it wrought
in you.

God seems to be the *cause* of a tender conscience, *Gen. 39. 9.* how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?

2. It differs from *penitential contrition*, as this respects actions *past*, but *tenderness* things also *future*; and (as in the former) contrition seems to be some *cause* of tenderness, the heart never being truly tender, till it be a broken and a contrite heart.

3. It differs from *vigilancy*, this being principally exercised about our *temptations*, and such other dangers, but tenderness about the good or evil of our actions.

4. It differs not only from a scrupulous conscience, but from a dubious; this *hesitating* betwixt assent and dissent, that firmly bent against any manifest evil.

CHAP. VI.

Of the quick sense of a tender conscience, being the *formalis ratio* of it.

A distinction
somewhat like
is in *Aristot.*
lib. 7. Ethic. c.
10. Ἡ αἰσθησις τῶν
πρακτικῶν ἐστὶν ἡ
ἐν τῷ ποιεῖν καὶ
ἐν τῷ ποιεῖν.
Solum dicitur
practicus, dum
ad factibilia
et agibilia
inferiora con-
versitur. Ger-
son.

1. **T**His sensibility is a *quick motion* of the practical understanding in a *sudden check* of something done, or a *sudden stop* at something to be done.

2. The *practical understanding* is a power of the soul, which apprehends things in *ordine ad opus*, in order to some operation, as the *speculative understanding* in *ordine ad scientiam*, in order to something to be known. For example, the speculative understanding considers of *hearts*, as having such virtues and operations in them, the practical, whether I should for such purposes *use* such simples, and in what manner to use them. The theoretical intel-
lect

left considers of marriage as it is the ordinance of God, as a great mystery, as a means of the propagation of mankind: the practical intellect, considers of entering or refusing such or such a marriage. A Judge upon the Bench makes use of his *theorick* intellect, when he *discourses* of the Laws and Statutes what they allow or forbid; he makes use of the *practick* power, when he examines and condemns malefactors by the law.

3. Whence it is a rule in Philosophy, *Intellectus theoreticus conquiscescit in notitia principiorum, intellectus practicus in notitia singularium*. Upon which is grounded the distinction of a (a) *contemplative* and an *active* life.

4. The quick motion of this *practical* understanding is imperated by the *will truly sanctified*, which lays a general charge upon all the faculties, above all things what ever they do to keep all sin out of the soul.

Cum magna horrens
Quæ posse fieri non putes metus tamen.
Senec. trag. in OEdip.

(a) Vita humana in activam & contemplativam dividitur, quæ quidem attenditur secundum intellectum. Intellectus autem dicitur per activum & contemplativum. Aquin. 22. qu. 179. art. 2;

CHAP. VII.

Of the immediate object of a tender Conscience.

1. **T**He object of this sensibility or tenderness, is about (b) *doing* or *having done* any thing which is *clearly evil*, and consequently of omitting or having omitted any thing which is truly good.

2. The *absolute* and *primary* rule of evil and good to a tender conscience, is the *express* and *clear* Word of God rightly understood; for every thing in some particular

(b) Conscientia est actus quo scientiam nostram ad ea quæ agimus applicamus. Aquin. 1. part. q. 79. art. 13.

particular places forbidden or commanded is not the rule.

3, I call Gods Word the *primary* and *absolute* rule, because other rules there are which bind the conscience, but they do it by the *virtue* of the *absolute* rule.

4. Those *secondary* rules of conscience, as some Divines both lately and formerly have noted, are
 1. The Laws, Orders, and Mandates of our Superiours. 2. Our own spontaneous *vows* and *promises*.
 3. The consideration of *offence* towards a weak Brother, which in some cases is a direction to conscience.

5. Whereas the late Reverend and Judicious Bishop Sanderfon (who doth not deal in his Cases upon this my subject save only upon the rule of conscience in one place) asserts that the *Scripture* is not the *adequate* rule of conscience, but the *will* of God in what way soever revealed to men; that I may not seem to leave out any thing necessary to the definition of the rule, nor to thwart what that worthy Casuist hath written, I conceive I have both fully and fully comprized all under those words, *The Word of God rightly understood*. For speaking only of the tender conscience of a *Christian*, and not a mere *natural* man, I have no occasion to take in the (a) law of nature by it self, as one way of revelation; there being nothing commanded or prohibited in the *law* of nature, which is not more *explicitely* and *excellently* to be found in the *Scripture*, which doth *eminently* contain in it the law of nature. And whereas extraordinary, particular, private revelations, are not to be *expounded*, but (b) *suspected* when pretended, I make them no certain part of the rule. But as to the way of revelation, which is by instructions and consequences drawn out of *Scripture*, I have

(a) Lex vetus distinguitur a lege naturae non tanquam ab ea omnino aliena, sed tanquam ei aliquid superaddens. Sic ut enim gratia praesupponit naturam, ita oportet quod lex divina praesupponat legem naturalem. Aquin. 12. qn. 99. art. 2.

(b) Non dicat ideo verum esse — quia ille frater noster, vel illa soror nostra tale visum vigiliis aut dormiens somniavit. Aug. de unitate ecclesiae.

touched

couched it under these words : *Rightly understood.* For he that rightly understands a Text, knows the scope of it, and ~~he~~ that knows what that Text truly and properly teaches, by what means soever.

6. One of the *secondary* rules of evil and good to the conscience, is the *Laws and Mandates* of our Rulers and Governours ; these (a) bind by the power and virtue of the primary rule, 1 Pet. 2. 13. Submit your selves to every ordinance of man, for the Lords sake : ~~and~~ *and* ~~submitting~~ *submitting* ~~you~~ *you* to every humane creature, as it sounds in the Greek. *Estis* thus, to every man being Gods creature, as *Mark* 6. preach the Gospel to every creature, i. e. to every man ; yet as there is a *restriction* there to be understood, not to infants or distracted persons, so here is a restriction ; for we are not bound to submit to every man, but to such as are in authority. But *Heinsius* a Protestant and a learned Critick, tells us, That it is very properly rendered to every humane ordinance. For the *Hellenists Ecclesiasticus* 38. 12. writeth thus ; *כי יאמרו לך ר' אורי' וי' יאמר לך ר' אורי' וי' יאמר לך ר' אורי'*, Give place to the Physician, for God hath ordain'd him. Though we use not the *Apocryphal Books* as a ground of faith, yet there are many excellent things in them ; and besides the Greek *Apocrypha* gives light to divers dark places in the *New Testament*, being a kind of *Hebraizing Greek* ; and therefore to distinguish it from other Greek, called by *Jos. Scaliger*, and some other Criticks, the *Hellenists Greek*, as is also the LXX. of the Canonical Books in the Old Testament. Nor shall a man ever come to the true meaning of some of the darkest places of the New Testament, that is not well versed in the *Hellenists*. Another Text is in *Rom.* 13. 5. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake.

7. They therefore that are still *opposing* these subordinate rules one to another, submit to neither ; for

D

opposition

(a) Omnis leg. flativa potestas descendit à potestate supremâ i. e. divina — quicquid igitur committitur contra legem humanam idem etiam fit contra legem ei. — Qui hoc etiam præcipit ut illi potestati obediantur. — Non enim fingi potest præcipiendi potestas sine obligatione obediendi. Tit. 3. 1. Estis in Sentent. lib. 2. dist. 36.

*Ubi hoc iubet
pater quod con-
tra Deum non
fit, sic audien-
dum est quomodo
Deus quia obe-
dire patri iussit
Deus. Aug.
cont. 1. in
Psal. 70.*

*Quicquid vice
Vei Prælarus
præcipit, quod
non sit certum
displacere Deo,
haud secus ac-
cipiendum,
quam si præci-
piat ipse Deus.*

*Ad secundum
præceptum (ve-
rius ad certum
um) reducitur
omnis ratio
voti. Estius
lib. 3. dist. 39.*

opposition is not to be made, but when man com-
mands or ordains something *contrary* to the ordinance
and commandments of God, and then the rule holds
Ad. 5. 19. we ought to obey God rather than man :
Or when men thrust out Gods laws, and place their
own in their room, as *Mat. 15. 9.* They taught do-
ctrines, the commandments of men, that is, they shut
out the *fifth Commandement*, and brought in their
Corban into the room of it, *v. 4, 5, 6.* Or lastly,
when they shall bring in any thing as of God directly
and immediately which is not, or as an essential part
to his worship which he hath not prescribed. In
which sense *Tertullian* is to be understood, *Nobis ni-
hil ex nostro arbitrio indulgere licet, sed nec eligere quod
aliquis ex arbitrio suo induxerit.*
Bein. de præcept. & disp. c. 11.

8. The second secondary rule of evil or good, is a
lawful vow. This also binds by virtue of the abso-
lute and primary rule. *Deut. 23. 21.* When thou shalt
vow a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack
to pay it. See *Psal. 76. 11. Eccles. 5. 4, 5. Ad. 5. 4.*

9. The third secondary rule is in case of offence,
but it is, when the things are such as neither Gods
Law nor Mans eyes us to : we having liberty to
leave or use them *1 Cor. 8. 9.* But take heed this li-
berty of yours become not a stumbling block to them
that are weak.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the clearness of the primary rule;

1. **T**His rule I have asserted in the former Chapter
to be the express and clear Word of God.

a. Those portions of Gods Word I call express and
clear,

clear, which if they concern us that are Christians, are not obnoxious to *divers interpretations or criticisms* invalidating any certain sense.

3. Therefore where a text admits of *divers probable interpretations*, or is by critical observation carried beside the vulgar sense, there can be no rule of good or evil to the conscience.

4. The reason is, because that which becomes the true object of the speculative intellect, which searches what is true or false, cannot be the object nor rule of the practical intellect, till the speculative hath resolved it.

5. Not that I think the *maxims* of the Canon-law applicable to this: *Quæ in testamentis id scripta sunt ut intelligi non possunt, perinde sunt ac si scripta non essent*; because, however it be in mans Testament, in Gods Testaments, it is Scripture still, though the meaning be not certainly known.

6. In places therefore *dubious and difficult*, it is not good sense to say, *my conscience tells me this or that* is the sense of such a Text, because conscience is manifestly seated in the practical intellect, whose work is not to find out true or false in any matter.

7. Yet where the (a) Church hath authoritatively given the interpretation of dubious places, a tender conscience should be tender of rejecting it, as both *charitably* and *dutifully* hoping that the Church would not give an interpretation, either contrary to other express Scriptures, the Analogy of faith, or to the consent of the Universal Church in the most pure and ancient times of its institution.

8. Nor is it less than *equality*, that if the people trust the Church first in *setting out the bound of Canonical Scripture* against such as would (b) *adde* or (c) *subtract*: Secondly, in *translating it* against such

(a) But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee, for they will not hearken to me, Ezek. 3.

7.

(b) The Romanists.

(c) Si & Petrus augetur—locus ex epistola in prioribus, quæ sola genuina est, &c. Petrus quoque vocatur in ista epistola periclitum quæ sub Petri nomine iuxta vulgata est, &c. Wala. Melancthus (alias Salmastius) de Episcopis, & Presbyteris, and others besides him.

as would lock it up, they should also chearfully and gratefully receive the Churches interpretation, it being not imaginable to an *ingenious* and *charitable* man, that they who have been faithful and industrious in *fixing the Canon* and translating it, would be careless and deceitful in the interpretation.

9. I do therefore (but with humble submission to the judgment of the Church) affirm that a tender conscience being guided in her rule by the *Churches translation*, may also be guided by her interpretation.

10. But besides *ambiguous* places there is *clear* Scripture enough to shew us what is good and what is evil. *Deut* 30. 15. See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. But more pregnantly *Mic*. 6. 8. He hath shewed thee, O man! what is good, &c.

11 Yet may *clear* places be obscured by *unsound interpretations*, and by none more then by *over-lax* and *large synecdoches*. For of all places, the moral law is most clear, yet are the synecdoches some make, so large, that a man knows not when he breaks them or keeps them.

12. Above the rest of the moral law, none seems more clog'd with the trope aforesaid, then the *second Commandment*. So that as they are guilty of one gross extream, who *expunge* it out of the decalogue, so they in some degree of another, that have over-much enlarged it. For if it must be extended to all *inventions of men*, whereby they cloath the worship of God with *fisting circumstances*, we cannot stir a foot, but we must stumble over some graven image. Then is the tolling a Bell, the turning a Glass, the tuning a Psalm, or almost any thing else, not expressly commanded, a graven image. Then is every Christian Congregation in the world a Congregation of Idolaters, which is grossly absurd.

13. By what therefore hath been said in this and the former Chapters it is manifest, that the object

ject of the tender conscience is *clear* or *manifest* evil or good.

14. Therefore *bare resemblances* of evil, are not the object of tenderness. Nor is that place 1 *Thes.* 5. 22. Abstain from every appearance of evil, so to be understood. Because if that were the sense, mans life should be a *perpetual thraldome*; *is* *is*; also is as well kind as appearance: and *Estius* says well, it is the same with that *(b. 4. 12. to walk honestly towards them without: many good things carry a resemblance of evil, as diligence in callings of covetousness; cheerfulness of levity; reservedness of anger, lawful recreations of voluptuousness; and commonly all virtues and graces of some one extrem.*

15. The *restritions* are these. 1. It must be *clearly* evil of which it is an *appearance*. 2. Such an appearance it must be as doth necessarily *inferre* us *guilty*, or that we *love* or like that evil. 3. Such an appearance as we have *freedom* to forbear.

16. There is but one consideration more in the object, *viz.* that a tender conscience is conversant about the evil and good of our *own* actions, and not of other mens; for however grief may arise in our hearts for the misdoings of others, yet can it not be called trouble of conscience, but sorrow of mind:

say not thine own, but of the others. *Vid. pag. ult. Gal. 6. 4.*

Yet is the tender Conscience tender of another mans conscience, 1 *Cor. 10. 19.* conscience I

But let every

CHAP. IX.

Of the subject of a tender conscience.

THe remote subject is (as hath been shewed) the practical intellect in the soul and the will, but more approximately, a regenerate and sanctified soul. For if the fear of God and true softness of heart, are only

only subjected in a regenerated soul, so likewise is this.

Th. 1. 15. But to them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

2. Tenderness therefore is not only the *adjunct* of such a soul, but the *adequate adjunct* of it, and therefore is *reciprocated* with the subject, so that there is no regenerate man without a tender conscience, no tender conscience but in a regenerate man, as it is a gracious disposition.

3. Hence it is as *ridiculous* for a wicked man as a thief, a perjured person, or traitor, to pretend to tenderness of conscience, as for a *beast* to pretend to *rationality*. If two thieves should rob a man, and one persuade to murder him, and the other refuse and hinder, it is not tenderness of conscience properly in him, but either some degree of *good nature*, or *Gods restraining grace*, or *fear of a divine hand of punishment*, that frequently finds out murderers. Conscience is as truly tender of *themselves*, as of murder, *Gen. 37. 22.* when *Reuben* said, *sired no blood*, it cannot be thought such a tenderness in him, who was not afraid to defile his fathers bed.

4. To conclude this, the sanctified soul in regard of this adjunct, is not only *subjectum recipiens ad se*, but *in se*. Tenderness hath an *inherence* in such a soul, and cannot be severed from it, how ever at some times it may be more *dull* than at other.

CHAP. X.

Of the adjuncts of a tender Conscience.

THE adjuncts, properties, or the effects of this holy disposition will serve for the marks or characters of it by which it may in some sort be discovered where it is.

1. A proportionality to the object. The greater the evil, the more tender the conscience: Those evils especially it most checks us for and keeps us from, which are, 1. Most dishonourable to God and his Gospel. 2. Such as most wound the conscience. Those that most dishonour God and his Gospel, are sins against the *Laws of Nature, Nations, and Human Society*, such as are breach of our faith and promises, (especially when it is publick) perjuries, and above all, *treasons*. In the late times, when men saw no punishment, but rather encouragement to all dissuality, conscience should have restrained them, for the actions of those times were dishonourable to Christ in the sight of unbelievers, to the reformed religion in the sight of other professions, to the English Nation in the sight of all Nations. 2. The sins that most wound the conscience are breach of vows, oaths, when lawful for the matter, and imposed by lawful authority, such as the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy were, but the *Covenant was not*.

2. Tenderness is ever joyned with a propensity to Gods publick worship. (a) I never in all my life knew a conscientious person, but did love Gods worship in his house, and the more conscientious the more constant in it and to it. (b) They that can sit at home without necessity whole Lords days, nay many months together, shew from the coldness of their affections to their God that their consciences are not tender but benumbed, or rather leared.

à maledictione legis, & a iugo legalium ceremoniarum per Christum. Beza Epist. 24.

(b) *Is abutitur Christiana libertatis beneficio, vel potius adhuc renundatus est sub peccato, qui vel suis magistratibus re. propositi sponte non pareat in Domino.* Thed. Beza. ibid.

It is no argument, but a pitiful shift in too many to cover idleness, pride, disdain of the ministerial

scientiis permittendam esse? minime ut hac quidem libertas intelligitur, i. e. quo quisque modo vult eum colat. Est enim hoc mored abolicum dogma, finendum esse nunquamque ut si vult peccat. Beza epist.

And after that King Achishadnezer had made him to swear by the name of the Lord he forswore himself and rebelled. 1. 44.

(a) *Christiana libertas non est vaga & effractus licentia qua qui quid libet, pro nostro arbitrio agamus aut omitta: mus-- sed est liberatio*

facta ab inviolabili libertatem con-

office, and perhaps something worse, to say, I cannot come to Church: I understand not the meaning of such a ceremony, I approve not of such prayers, I like not the calling, gifts, or disposition of such a minister, I like not joyning in assembly with profane persons.

Doctor Ames, a known enemy of the Church-government here, and something inclining to the New England mode, in his Book *de conscientia*, Chap. 4. speaks thus: If any through error of conscience should judge it unlawful to be present at the Church assembly, because he knows the Minister to be a bad-man, and imagines he shall by his presence there partake with his improbity, he sins much more by keeping away, then by being present; because it is a far greater sin to neglect the worship of God, then to communicate with anothers improbity, except a man by being present were forced to commit idolatry. Thus Amesius.

Si quis per conscientia errorem, illi citum judicaret interesse catui ecclesie, cui alius tenetur adesse, quia ministrum illum ecclesie improbum hominem esse novit, &

se communicaturum putat cum ejus improbitate, ille magis peccat abstinendo, quam si adesset, quia gravius est peccatum negligere cultum Dei quam communicare cum alicuius improbitate personali in illo cultu. Ames. de consc. cap. 4.

But no man in our assemblies is forced to practise or behold any such thing as idolatry. Nor doth he that is present where sinners are at Gods worship, communicate therefore with them in their sins, any more then by living in the same Parish with them. The ancient non-conformists were all of this judgment, and so are generally if not totally the Divines of the Presbyterian judgment at this day. Fearful no doubt is their sin, and so it will appear at the last day, to refrain Gods publick Ordinances upon such pretences; much more upon pride, laziness, and hatred of Church-men and Church-government.

Arheists.

1 Chron. 16. 29.

No greater contemnners of God, then such as contemnan his publick worship and service, who give not unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, that bring not an offering, nor come before him to worship

ship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: Who worship not the Lord in his sanctuary, nor delight to give thanks to him in a great congregation or praise him among much people: more Atheism and contempt of the divine Majesty they cannot shew, except they should proclaim it in every Market, or write it upon every Wall, that there is no God. And if it be not timously prevented, a deluge of *Heathenism* and *Judaism* will quickly rush in upon us. Divers there are that have not been at Church for many years, nor do they at all use or frequent the Sectarian Assemblies or any other, but sit at home following their own occasions. Others not so bad, come to the publick Assemblies, but very rarely, very unconstantly. Some come reasonable duly, but it is only as *hearers*, they never partake of the Lords Supper, though never so earnestly invited and persuaded; they are so bold as to plead against it, as a thing needless and unprofitable; they commonly urge the danger of unworthy participation, and the difficulty of self-examination as a reason of Non-Communion. They would make the world believe that Christ hath given some dangerous law to his Church, whose yoke is casie and burden is light. And some of this sort, the younger sort especially come (as by their carriage it appears) partly to gaze, to feed their wanton senses, to talk and discourse of vanities, even then whilst God is speaking to them in his Word; yea, which is worse, to manifest and make known to all how little they regard the oracles of God: such an heap of libertinism have the late *Anarchical confusions* left still behind them. Inomuch that what with the Atheistical practises of some who own no Church; the cold and loose dealing of others that own it at their leisure; and the dividing practises of a considerable number who frequent none but such as are private: the publick worship of God, the glory and strength, the beauty and security of a Nation is sadly eclipsed. But I hope it

Psal. 29. 12.

Psal. 35. 18.

Iſa. 30. 26.

is *but in an eclipse*, and so will again recover. Lord let not the Gates of *Sion* mourn, which thou lovest more then all the dwellings of *Jacob* ! If it be thy goodness to thy Church, that her Teachers shall not be removed into a corner, but her eyes shall behold them, it is no less, that her people shall not remove into corners, but that her Teachers eyes shall behold their people.

I deny not but such may be the Churches exigency, as that she may for some time and in some degree, bear with such as are erroneous and scrupulous, when it is for the good and safety of the sound part of the Church ; but this I presume not to deal upon.

All that I presume to say (and none can blame me for it) is this : They that own our rule, but not our principles and discipline, have less to plead for their separation ; and they that own both our rule, principles and discipline, have nothing to plead ; abhorring Sectarian principles, yet throwinging themselves under their practices.

Atheists and
Libertins.

3. However such a conscience is tender of all divine laws, yet is it in a more peculiar and remarkable manner tender of Christs *new* and *great Commandment of Love*, and consequently of his injunction so earnestly and frequently inculcated by the Apostle, to beware of making *Schisms*, *Divisions*, and *Separations*. He hath no tender conscience that is not tender and fearful of making breaches and parties in the Church of God.

4. A tender conscience is tender of another mans conscience. Some that former years professed tenderness about a *White Garment*, about Kneeling and Standing Gestures, &c. when they had got the power into their own hands, had no mercy on the consciences of their brethren that had a thousand times more cause to be tender and wary of *taking the Cove-*

It was mine
own lot to
have the Co-
venant rendered
me so soon as
Printed, and
upon my absolute
refusal, to be
exiled from my
Flock, *March 2. 1643.* and put to sad exigencies.

nant

nant; but they who had strained at the former *gnats*, did not only swallow the *Covenant Camel*, but did endeavour to cram and ram it down the throats of their brethren, *wrenching open their jaws* with the cold and *barb* key of poverty and ruin; and which was worse, making such scandalous that should refuse it, how *unwarrantable* soever from the imposers and composers, how *unsuitable* soever for the matter to sound and sworn principles, and how *pernicious* soever in the ends and effects of it.

5. It is tender of *both* Tables of the Law. If it will not admit of *profaness*, neither will it of *unrighteousness*. If it be tender of an idle and *vain oar*, it is no less of *dereliction*; if of *neglecting the Sabbath*, so also of *neglecting the Poor*; if it abhors *Idols*, which are a breach of the first Table, it abandons *Sacrilege*, which is a breach of *both* Tables.

6. It is troubled if it hath admitted any thing against the clear rule, be it never so little, be it but in a thought, *Deut. 15. 9.* Beware there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, *Isa. 35. 4.* He is of a fearful heart, *Eccle. 10. 20.* Curse not the King, *no* not in thy *thought*. They dare not let any *spot of guilt* cleave to them; Their conversation shews they do exercise themselves to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards Men, *Act.*

24. 16.

7. Above all men to be void of offence towards the Magistrate. He is not apt by any intemperate speeches, much less, otherwise to fly upon the Law or the Magistrate, yea though they should require what he cannot do. His prayers are as many for him, his good speeches as frequent of him, and his fidelity as great towards him, as if he had never received any difficult law from him. He translates those precepts out of *Oeconomicks* into *Politicks*, which are given us *Eph. 6. 3. Col. 3. 22. 1 Pet. 2. 18.* He bears meekly the will and suffers meekly the anger of the Magistrate.

2 Cor. 8. 20.
Avoiding this,
that no man
should blame
us, &c.

*Dna res sunt
conscientia: a &
fama. propter
nos conscientia
nostra nobis
sufficit: pro-
pter alios fama
necessaria est:
conscientia tibi,
fama; proximo.
August. Serm.
prior de vita
com. suorum
clericorum.*

To what he may yield he is the forwarder if he cannot yield to every thing. He is first most tender of provoking God, and next of provoking Gods Viceroy. It is the grief of his soul if he cannot come up to every thing the Magistrate expects of him.

8. He is willing to be inform'd, and to hear what may be said. As he is tender of doing any thing contrary to his judgment, so is he tender of judging contrary to the truth. He is not self-willed, but will hear what may be said against his way and his interest. *Eli* knew *Samuel* had a sharp message, yet says he, God do so to thee, and more also if thou hide, &c. 1 Sam. 3. 17

Gal. 2. 13. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, in so much that *Bar-nabas* also was carried away with their dissimulation

9. He is not apt to be confessor, he considers that a good man may fall by temptation, and he rejoices not at the fall of his brother, *Prov.* 24. 16. A just man falls seven times a day, &c. 17. rejoices not when thine enemy falls. He scoffs not at, nor triumphs over his enemy much less his neighbour and friend when he is down, but seeks his restoring, considering himself lest he also be tempted, *Gal.* 6. 1.

Seek ye out of the books of the Lord and read. *Isa.* 34. 16.

Mal. 2. 7.

See for this Ecclesiast. 6. 33.—36. and ch. 8. 8, 9.

10. *Conscientia tenera non est temeraria*. In doubtful cases it will seek and ask for information before it acts; though it is not scrupulous, it is wary, considerate and watchful; it takes counsel concerning the ways of God in Gods way, it goes to the Law and to the Testimony, *Isa.* 8. 20. and if it want understanding in that, it goes to the Interpreter, *Job* 33. 23. to the Priest, whose lips should preserve knowledge, & whose mouth they should seek the Law: if he cannot satisfy, it inquires what the Church in her Synods and Councils hath universally determin'd; not building its faith on the Church, which is built upon the Rock it self, *Mat.* 16. but in doubtful cases seeking publick interpretation before private, and acquiescing therein, though not as a ground of faith yet as the safest and probable means of knowledge and instruction.

These

These are the adjuncts and properties of a true tender conscience.

But all this while, what shall we say to a doubting conscience? Rom. 14. 23. He that doubteth is damned or judged if he eat, because whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Question.

A dubious conscience is somewhat like a tender conscience, though not the same with it.

Answ. 1.

It is observable, the things the Apostle speaks of, are matters of religion and not about civil matters. So that if a man should doubt in civil matters, this Text will give no sure footing for forbearance upon doubting; as if a man should doubt, whether he might lawfully undertake the office of a Constable or Headborough, or whether he might pledge his friend when he drinks to him, or in a thousand instances more.

Answ. 2.

The Apostle doth not instance in things clearly evil or good, but such as at that juncture of time betwixt the setting of the Law and the dawning of the Gospel were dark and somewhat doubtful, as about the Jewish meats and festivals, yea, were in respect of express and clear good, not considerable; and therefore says, that the kingdom of God is not in meats, i. e. doth not so much value eating or forbearing meats or drinks, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost: the Apostle therefore making a clear distinction, betwixt things *unquestionably* good and things *absolutely* good; I say, those things that he hath perswaded let no man joyn together, as if they were the same matter of doubting.

Answ. 3.

Therefore if any shall be so blind and bold as to say, let a thing be never so good that is required of me; if I be not perswaded it is good, I may not do it; or let it be never so evil, if I be perswaded I should do it, I must; they have no ground from the Apostles doctrine, who only speaks of doubting at meats and

Answ. 4.

and days which he distinguishes from manifest good,
vers. 17.

Thou hast despised my holy things, and hast profaned my Sabbaths,
Ezek. 22. 8.

If therefore the thing be *clearly good*, as to receive the holy Supper, to joyn in publick prayer, to hear the holy Word read, interpreted and applied, though the conscience should stick at these good things expressly commanded (which surely must need be some *strange fashion'd extick* conscience) yet are we bound to perform the aforementioned duties, or any other of the like nature.

Ans^r. 5.

In like manner we may say, if the thing be expressly evil, as to Worship an Image, to Forswear ones self, to Rob my Neighbour, to Lye with my Sister, to Kill my Brother, though conscience should urge me to any of these or the like, I may not do them.

Reas. 1.

Because, else we set conscience above God, which is a breach both of the first and second Commandments 1 *Job. 3. 20.* God is greater then our conscience. Conscience must not regulate the Word of God, but that must regulate the conscience.

Reas. 2.

It is an undoubted rule, *Nulla est obligatio ad illicita.* Gods law obliges not to sin, therefore conscience which is to be ruled by that, must not. Error is a sin, and how can it bind? And if we are bound to lay down error of judgement, then also error of conscience, both being part of the old man to be put off *Eph. 4. 22.* as is observed both by *Amesius* and *Perkins.*

Reas. 3.

If men should plead never so much satisfaction of conscience to do the forementioned evils, or forbear the good aforesaid, yet every man hath in him so much certainly of the law of nature, and every Christian probably so much of the knowledge of the Word, that they can neither do the evil or forbear the good without *reluctancy*, so that conscience in such cases if pleaded is but a fond and weak pretence.

Reas. 4.

Grant but this allowable, what good may not be omitted? All the ordinances of God may lye *unfrequented*

quented and disused, neglected and affronted, Yea what mischiefs may not be acted upon pretext of conscience? One neighbour may plunder, pillage, yea, and murder another upon this pretext; Servants may make away their Masters goods & then too; Children may butcher their Parents, and which is more, Subjects their King; what (a) villanies and outrages were they that were not committed of later years upon pretence of conscience and reformation? and upon those tragical actings how well did the words of the Poet agree to us?

But blessed be God, I may say what he adds, τοῦ ἁγίου ἱσχυρός.

(a) *Et quando uberior visorum copia?* Juvenal Satyr. 1.

Quod mare nam Anglicæ,
Non decolorare cedes?
Quæ caret Ora cruore nostro?

Mor. lib. 2.
od. 1.

If the thing be not forbidden by God, but lawful or not evil but indifferent, if the Magistrate command it to be done, though we know not the good or the end of the ordinance, the conscience is bound to yield to it; otherwise we take away from the Magistrate the power of making laws and ordinances, and give him only a power to confirm them that are made already in Scripture contrary to 1 Pet. 2. 13. *prohibentur*--- Beza epist. 24. ad fratres peregrinorum ecclesiarum in Angliā.

Ans. 6.

Res aliqui per se media mutant quodammodo naturam, quum aliquo legitimo mandato vel præcepto fiant, vel

If the Magistrate make a law about meats, which are in themselves and so acknowledged by him to be but indifferent, let it be out of civil ends for the good of the commonwealth, or out of religious ends, viz. charitably and christianly to comply with the ancient Churches of Christ, however a subject may plead matter of health or want, yet the plea of conscience in this case is unwarrantable and ridiculous.

Esti conscientias proprias: sed Deus ligat: tamen quantum vel magis stratus qui Dei minister est iudicat ut resse reipublice, ut quippiam alio

qui pro se licitum non facit: vel Ecclesia ordinem suum & decorum adeoque edificationis rationem habens, leges aliquas de rebus mediis rite conditis, illa leges à populo omnino sunt observanda. Beza ibid.

Anfw. 7.

1 Cor. 8. 8.

*Leges Mugi-
stratus, var-
nus consien-
tias ligant ut
nemo sciens &
prudens rebel-
latur: animo, possit absque peccato vel facere quæ se prohibentur, vel omisere quæ se
præcipiuntur. Beza ibid.*

If the thing be lawful in it self, and indifferent as meats are, and no obligation from the Governour lies upon me, I am then left to follow the light of mine own conscience, and to take care I do nothing against mine own perswasion, for of such things are the Apostles instances, and not of things commanded by God or man, or forbidden.

Anfw. 8.

1 Cor. 10. 29.

*Nulla ratione
committere de-
beo, nec occasio-
nem dare ut
alium errantem
& infirmum
habens consien-
tiam, iudice-
ret, i. e. dam-
net libertatem
meam qua
possum indiffe-
renter quidvis
edere Eftius in
locum.*

If the thing be lawful and indifferent, both in regard of Gods law, of mans law, and in the perswasion of mine own conscience, so that I think I may use it or not use it, do it or not do it, and have no tye any of those 3. ways, either from God, Man, or my Self, I must then look next to the Apostles rule concerning offences. 1. Not judge or despise him that is not just of my perswasion, Rom. 14. 3. 2. Not lay a stumbling block in our brothers way, vers. 13. Nor to give him occasion to think ill of me. 3. Not to grieve or afflict our brother with our liberty, vers. 25. 4. Not to occasion any brangling or disputing, but rather to forbear that, how lawful soever that may occasion it, v. 19. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith we may edifie one another, Gal. 5. 13. For brethren ye have been called unto liberty, only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Domine Deus, da nobis celeriter audire, frequenter legere, diligenter attendere, recte intelligere, tuto agere, bene & inculpate vivere, per Jesum Christum Dominum & salvatorem nostrum. Amen.

